
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6101

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

By Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Ranker, Frockt, Palumbo, Dhingra, Kuderer, McCoy, Cleveland, Saldaña, Billig, Van De Wege, Hunt, and Hasegawa)

READ FIRST TIME 01/19/18.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing the evergreen free college
2 program, which provides for affordable access to institutions of
3 higher education; amending RCW 43.88C.010; and adding a new chapter
4 to Title 28B RCW.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The evergreen free college program is
7 established to help make four years of college affordable and
8 accessible to all citizens of the state of Washington by offering a
9 tuition waiver for eligible students enrolled in a bachelor's or
10 associate degree or certificate program offered by Washington's
11 institutions of higher education. The purpose of the program is to
12 encourage more Washington residents who have not yet earned a degree
13 to enroll in and successfully complete a degree or certificate that
14 will lead to opportunities for further education and jobs. By making
15 a higher education credential more affordable and accessible,
16 Washington will make more progress towards the legislature's goal of
17 seventy percent of Washington adults having a postsecondary
18 credential by 2023.

19 It is the intent of the legislature to implement the evergreen
20 free college program in phases, starting with a free thirteenth year.
21 The legislature recognizes that a free thirteenth year and promise

1 programs are proven to significantly increase high school graduation
2 rates by ensuring all high school graduates know they can attend a
3 free year of college or community or technical college regardless of
4 their family incomes. Thus, investment in these programs is an
5 evidence-based means to improve high school graduation rates and to
6 reduce, or even eliminate, opportunity gaps in postsecondary
7 education for students from underrepresented minority groups, low-
8 income students, foster youth, and students with disabilities.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply
10 throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires
11 otherwise.

12 (1) "Council" means the Washington student achievement council.

13 (2) "Eligible degree or certificate program" means:

14 (a) An associate degree program;

15 (b) Academic programs with credits that can fully transfer via an
16 articulation agreement or lead toward a baccalaureate degree or
17 postbaccalaureate degree at an institution of higher education; or

18 (c) Professional and technical programs that lead to a recognized
19 postsecondary credential.

20 (3) "Gift aid" means financial aid received from the federal Pell
21 grant, the state need grant program under chapter 28B.92 RCW, the
22 college bound scholarship program under chapter 28B.118 RCW, the
23 opportunity grant program under chapter 28B.50 RCW, the opportunity
24 scholarship program under chapter 28B.145 RCW, or any other state
25 grant or scholarship program that provides funds for educational
26 purposes with no obligation of repayment. "Gift aid" does not include
27 student loans and work-study programs.

28 (4) "Institutions of higher education" has the same meaning as in
29 RCW 28B.10.016.

30 (5) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance.

31 (6) "Program" means the evergreen free college program.

32 (7) "Resident student" means a student who is a resident student
33 as defined in RCW 28B.15.012.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) Subject to availability of amounts
35 appropriated for this specific purpose, the office shall administer
36 the program for resident students seeking a bachelor's degree, an
37 associate degree, or certificate from a state institution of higher
38 education under the terms and conditions in this section.

1 (2) To be eligible for the program, a resident student who has
2 not previously earned an associate degree must be enrolled in a state
3 institution of higher education in an eligible degree or certificate
4 program.

5 (3) Students must complete the free application for federal
6 student aid (FAFSA) or the Washington application for state financial
7 aid (WASFA) each academic year in which they seek eligibility for the
8 program.

9 (4) To remain eligible for the program, once a student has earned
10 forty-five credits, the student must maintain a cumulative grade
11 point average of 2.0.

12 (5) For the 2019-20 academic year, eligible students shall
13 receive an award for a free thirteenth year, or three academic
14 quarters or the equivalent in semester hours, if they have:

15 (a) Graduated high school within the past six calendar months
16 before enrolling in a state institution of higher education; and

17 (b) A family income that does not exceed seventy percent of the
18 state median family income, adjusted for family size.

19 (6) For the 2020-21 academic year, eligible students shall
20 receive an award for six academic quarters or the equivalent in
21 semester hours if they have:

22 (a) Obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent within the
23 past eighteen calendar months before enrolling in a state institution
24 of higher education; and

25 (b) A family income that does not exceed seventy percent of the
26 state median family income, adjusted for family size.

27 (7) For the 2021-22 academic year, eligible students shall
28 receive an award for nine academic quarters or the equivalent in
29 semester hours if they have:

30 (a) Obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent within the
31 past thirty calendar months before enrolling in a state institution
32 of higher education; and

33 (b) A family income that does not exceed seventy percent of the
34 state median family income, adjusted for family size.

35 (8) For the 2022-23 academic year, eligible students shall
36 receive an award for twelve academic quarters or the equivalent in
37 semester hours if they have:

38 (a) Obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent within the
39 past forty-two calendar months before enrolling in a state
40 institution of higher education; and

1 (b) A family income that does not exceed seventy percent of the
2 state median family income, adjusted for family size.

3 (9) For the 2023-24 academic year, eligible students shall
4 receive an award for twelve academic quarters or the equivalent in
5 semester hours if they have:

6 (a) Obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent; and

7 (b) A family income that does not exceed seventy percent of the
8 state median family income, adjusted for family size.

9 (10) Beginning with the 2024-25 academic year, eligible students
10 shall receive an award for twelve academic quarters or the equivalent
11 in semester hours if they have:

12 (a) Obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent; and

13 (b) A family income that does not exceed the state median family
14 income, adjusted for family size.

15 (11) The office shall award grants to eligible students for an
16 amount up to the cost of tuition fees as defined in RCW 28B.15.020,
17 and services and activities fees as defined in RCW 28B.15.041, less
18 all other gift aid.

19 (12) By December 1, 2020, and annually by December 1st
20 thereafter, the council shall report to the appropriate policy and
21 fiscal committees of the legislature on the following impacts of the
22 program:

23 (a) Student enrollment in the eligible degree or certificate
24 programs;

25 (b) Student completion rates of credits, certificates, and
26 degrees;

27 (c) The cost of implementation, including the cost per student;

28 (d) Additional resources used to meet student needs, such as
29 counseling, precollege courses, child care, or transportation; and

30 (e) The number of students receiving wraparound services, the
31 number of schools providing wraparound services, and the resources
32 needed to provide wraparound services.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) The council shall develop a plan to
34 provide all program students who are enrolled at a state institution
35 of higher education with a student success course that is one quarter
36 long or the equivalent in semester hours, during or before their
37 first enrollment period, that teaches essential skills for college
38 success.

39 (2) Essential skills may include:

- 1 (a) Tips for study habits and time management;
- 2 (b) Financial aid information and resources;
- 3 (c) Connecting students with advisors;
- 4 (d) Encouraging student mentoring;
- 5 (e) Helping establish student cohorts; and
- 6 (f) Providing information about services available on campus.

7 (3) The plan must address how the council will ensure that
8 students receiving an evergreen free college program grant are
9 enrolled in such a course during or before their first quarter of
10 eligibility.

11 (4) The council shall provide the plan to the relevant committees
12 of the legislature by December 1, 2019, and begin implementation of
13 the plan for the 2020-21 academic year.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The Washington state institute for
15 public policy shall conduct a study on the effectiveness of the
16 evergreen free college program, including but not limited to:

17 (a) Any increase in enrollment in community or technical
18 colleges;

19 (b) Any decreases in enrollment elsewhere in institutions of
20 higher education;

21 (c) Changes in student persistence, completion, and time-to-
22 degree rates in eligible degree or certificate programs;

23 (d) Any change in need or delivery of student services;

24 (e) The fiscal impact of the program on the students,
25 institutions of higher education, and the state.

26 (2) The Washington state institute for public policy shall report
27 its findings to the relevant committees of the legislature by
28 December 1, 2024.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The caseload forecast council shall
30 estimate the anticipated caseload of the program and submit this
31 forecast as required in RCW 43.88C.020.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** The council may adopt rules to implement
33 this chapter.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** If the legislature does not appropriate
35 enough funding to support the statewide implementation of section 3
36 of this act, the office shall coordinate with the council to use the

1 appropriation received to provide competitive grants. The council
2 shall adopt criteria for the grants, prioritizing aid for at-risk
3 students and programs with funding partners.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** This chapter may be known and cited as the
5 evergreen free college act.

6 **Sec. 10.** RCW 43.88C.010 and 2015 c 128 s 2 are each amended to
7 read as follows:

8 (1) The caseload forecast council is hereby created. The council
9 shall consist of two individuals appointed by the governor and four
10 individuals, one of whom is appointed by the chairperson of each of
11 the two largest political caucuses in the senate and house of
12 representatives. The chair of the council shall be selected from
13 among the four caucus appointees. The council may select such other
14 officers as the members deem necessary.

15 (2) The council shall employ a caseload forecast supervisor to
16 supervise the preparation of all caseload forecasts. As used in this
17 chapter, "supervisor" means the caseload forecast supervisor.

18 (3) Approval by an affirmative vote of at least five members of
19 the council is required for any decisions regarding employment of the
20 supervisor. Employment of the supervisor shall terminate after each
21 term of three years. At the end of the first year of each three-year
22 term the council shall consider extension of the supervisor's term by
23 one year. The council may fix the compensation of the supervisor. The
24 supervisor shall employ staff sufficient to accomplish the purposes
25 of this section.

26 (4) The caseload forecast council shall oversee the preparation
27 of and approve, by an affirmative vote of at least four members, the
28 official state caseload forecasts prepared under RCW 43.88C.020. If
29 the council is unable to approve a forecast before a date required in
30 RCW 43.88C.020, the supervisor shall submit the forecast without
31 approval and the forecast shall have the same effect as if approved
32 by the council.

33 (5) A councilmember who does not cast an affirmative vote for
34 approval of the official caseload forecast may request, and the
35 supervisor shall provide, an alternative forecast based on
36 assumptions specified by the member.

37 (6) Members of the caseload forecast council shall serve without
38 additional compensation but shall be reimbursed for travel expenses

1 in accordance with RCW 44.04.120 while attending sessions of the
2 council or on official business authorized by the council.
3 Nonlegislative members of the council shall be reimbursed for travel
4 expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

5 (7) "Caseload," as used in this chapter, means:

6 (a) The number of persons expected to meet entitlement
7 requirements and require the services of public assistance programs,
8 state correctional institutions, state correctional noninstitutional
9 supervision, state institutions for juvenile offenders, the common
10 school system, long-term care, medical assistance, foster care, and
11 adoption support;

12 (b) The number of students who are eligible for the Washington
13 college bound scholarship program and are expected to attend an
14 institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.92.030;

15 (c) The number of students who are eligible for the evergreen
16 free college program and are expected to attend an institution of
17 higher education as defined in section 2 of this act; and

18 (d) The number of children who are eligible, as defined in RCW
19 ((43.215.405)) 43.216.505, to participate in, and the number of
20 children actually served by, the early childhood education and
21 assistance program.

22 (8) The caseload forecast council shall forecast the temporary
23 assistance for needy families and the working connections child care
24 programs as a courtesy.

25 (9) The caseload forecast council shall forecast youth
26 participating in the extended foster care program pursuant to RCW
27 74.13.031 separately from other children who are residing in foster
28 care and who are under eighteen years of age.

29 (10) Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the
30 definitions provided in RCW 43.88.020 apply to this chapter.

31 NEW SECTION. Sec. 11. Sections 1 through 9 of this act
32 constitute a new chapter in Title 28B RCW.

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